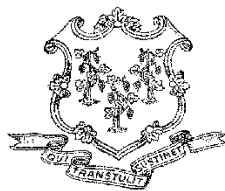


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Good morning Senator Cohen, Representative Gresko and members of the Environment Committee. I would like to express my support for SB 235, AN ACT CONCERNING VETERINARY REPORTING OF DOGS USED IN ANIMAL FIGHTING.

SB 253 would require veterinarians to report suspected cases of dogfighting to local law enforcement, and would shield them from civil liability for doing so. Animal abuse, and dogfighting in particular, is a cruel practice that impacts thousands of dogs; the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals estimates that tens of thousands of dogs may be victims of dogfighting, and in the past decade has been involved in approximately two hundred dogfighting cases in 24 states.¹ Because dogfighting is so widespread, and because the dogs involved are often neglected and abused from birth and die brutal deaths, mandated reporting is an important matter of animal welfare.

The issue, however, goes beyond animal welfare. Dogfighting is often associated with peripheral crimes, including gambling, the possession and sale of illegal drugs, the illegal possession of firearms, and gang activity.² Additionally, animal abuse has been linked by several studies to abuse of children, spouses, and other persons. One study of the largest battered women's shelters in forty-eight states found that 85.4% of the shelters reported women who disclosed incidents of animal abuse by the person who had abused them, with an overall estimate that animal abuse and spousal abuse co-existed in 44% of homes.³ Animals may be victims of the same abuse suffered by children or spouses in a household, or they may be threatened by abusers as an intimidation tactic, trapping the abused person for fear that a pet may be sold or harmed should he or she leave.

¹ A.S.P.C.A., *Dogfighting*, <https://www.aspc.org/investigations-rescue/dogfighting> (last visited Mar. 11, 2022).

² Hannah Gibson, *Detailed Discussion of Dog Fighting*, Animal Legal and Historical Center, Michigan State University College of Law, retrieved from: <https://www.animallaw.info/article/detailed-discussion-dog-fighting#id-13>

³ Frank R. Ascione et al., *The Abuse of Animals and Domestic Violence: A National Survey of Shelters for Women who are Battered*, 15(3) *Society & Animals* 205, 212 (1997) retrieved from: <https://www.animalsandsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ascione.pdf>

Veterinarians have professional training and skills that allow them to accurately identify abuse. Animal abuse is often covert, and veterinarians may be the only ones in a position to notice and or report it. Other states have recognized this by making veterinarians mandated reporters, including Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin.⁴ By mandating reporting, Connecticut will take an important step towards curbing animal abuse and the barbaric practice of dogfighting, identifying and preventing peripheral crimes, and intervening in the potential abuse of persons.

Thank you for hearing this important bill.

⁴ A.R.S. § 32-2239; West's Ann.Cal.Bus.&Prof.Code § 4830.5; M.G.L.A. 122 §58B; R.I. Gen. Laws 1956 4-1-26.1; W.S.A. § 173.12